21: Thomas T-5 (no date) 1932 MM2 Hadhramaut MM2

a sort of christening ceremony which we perform on ships with the cooler and more fragrant blood of the grape. The custom in Oman when a new house is finished is for the prospective occupant to slay a sheep on going in. He dabbles his hand in the pool of blood and smears the door-posts. This custom is also observed in the plain of the Dhufar during actual building operations. The meat is eaten by the builders themselves and the blood is smeared indiscriminately over the walls. On the completion of the house, the incomer dashes two hens' eggs on the threshold, two on the stairway and two on the upstairs doorway. This is anathema to the mountain dwellers, who in any case have no houses, but chiefly because the hen and all other bird flesh and birds' eggs are with them taboo. It would be the greatest insult to place such things as food before the non-Arabic speaking tribesman of the mountains.

LAW AND DISPUTES.

As in most tribal societies in Arabia, *hukm al hauz*, or a code of ancient sanctions, is the law. The *hauz* is a wise man of the tribe. Not infrequently his is an hereditary office, occasionally the *hauz* is the shaikh of his tribe. Shara law, i.e. holy law in Oman and elsewhere, is the law of the coastal townships. Outside them it will be resorted to in cases of matrimony, and sometimes of divorce and inheritance; in disputes or crime cases scarcely at all. That is the province of the *hauz*. The same is true of these South Arabians. The Shara or holy law is distasteful to these people and can only be imposed even along the coast by government force. Their own code varies considerably from the code of Oman or that of Hadhramaut, showing evidences of exclusive origin. They have a passionate attachment to the eye-for-an-eye idea, the need of making the punishment fit the crime. An example, told me by the Wali of Dhufar as having taken place last year is as follows: "X" was going on a journey into the "Y's" country and took a *rabia* from "Y." On arriving there the sacred law of protection was transgressed and "X" found himself wounded with a bullet through the fleshy part of his thigh. A *hauz* heard the case and decided that "Y," the innocent party but member of the offending tribe, must submit to the infliction of a similar wound as that which "X" had sustained. For this purpose a piece of stick was brought and sharpened skewer fashion. This was thrust into "Y's" leg and a bullet was threaded and drawn in its path. By local canons "X's" grievance was removed.

In Oman the abuse of the *rabia* would be followed by war between the two tribes unless the offended party agreed to the ruling of the *hauz*, when he would receive from the offenders *Laum-al-srijh* (blame of the face), which is usually assessed at 400 dollars. Murder, which in Arab tribal societies is almost invariably settled by blood-money which varies between 400 and 1,000 dollars (or rather its equivalent in kind), in these Qara mountains is assessed prodigiously high, in theory something like 5,000 dollars, which may take a lifetime to pay off, but is most usually complicated by a vendetta. The murdered man may be poor, so that his close relatives will in any case be impoverished, but collections are made from each and every member of the tribe, who as a point of honour or from inescapable custom, must bear the brunt.

24:Meulen and Wissmann T-3 (1931)1932 MM2 Hadhramaut MM2

he tries to mount it unnoticed. We have seen, however, and call out to him to get off, because we have just dismounted out of pity for the animal. His Yāfiᶜ comrade, who is walking in front of me, calls to him *not* to obey. I angrily bid him be silent, with the remark that I have paid for the donkeys and that, consequently, the command over them lies with me. At his insolent reply: "Hold your tongue!", he gets without further ado a box on his ears. He turns in fury, his rifle clenched in his hands.

"Shall I let myself be struck by you?"

"You shall obey me, you are under my command."

ᶜAbdallāh sulkily vanishes into the rear-guard, while we all keep our eyes on his rifle. His comrade comes to me before long to ask forgiveness for him. "Do not be angry with him, he is a little mad." Who can be angry for long with these rough children of nature? Towards evening, when the heat is over and thirst and fatigue no longer torment, both Yāfiᶜ soldiers get their so much desired remuneration and part with the two *Naṣrānīs* as the best of friends.

Close to Hadjarēn we passed a mosque at a saint's grave, and all sought the cool shadow of this place, forbidden to unbelievers. We were allowed to stand for a breathing-space in the porch. There is an earthenware jar full of water in the building, but we may not go inside, so our Makalla soldiers fetch water for us. A few peasant women who are passing by also come for the sake of the shelter. Their wide, dark-blue, rough cotton garments leave their faces uncovered. However, as soon as they see strangers, they draw their head-cloths over their faces. They wear straw hats, with pointed crowns and wide brims, as a protection against the sun.

3. AN UNFORGETTABLE RECEPTION IN HADJARĒN.

From here the way mounts towards the foot of the mountain close up against which lies Hadjarēn. A steep, paved, zigzag path leads at last to the gate of this town, which by